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HD **Lawsuit challenges missing climate-action targets**
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Petition asks court to set aside province's 2021 report, which left out interim emission goals group says are key to meeting commitments

Environmentalists are asking the courts to toss out British Columbia's latest climate accounting report, saying the province has not met its legal obligation to produce short- and long-term plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

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In a petition to the B.C. Supreme Court filed on Wednesday, Sierra Club BC argues that the province “acted unlawfully" in preparing the 2021 Climate Change Accountability Report, because the document does not include a plan to meet B.C.'s 2025 emissions reduction targets and beyond.

“They want to convince British Columbians that they have plans to meet this challenge, that they are making progress, but they have all these blind spots that are left unaddressed," Jens Wieting, the Sierra Club BC's senior climate campaigner, said in an interview. “That's why we have taken the steps to increase the pressure to close these gaps and come up with the missing policies."

The court action follows Tuesday's announcement of a new federal climate action plan.

Like B.C., Canada has struggled to meet its commitments to reduce emissions. In the new federal plan, Ottawa targets the oil and gas sector, where it aims to reverse decades of emissions growth with a requirement to cut pollution by a 42-per-cent reduction from 2019 levels by the end of the decade.

In its 2021 report, B.C. has omitted a plan to cut carbon pollution from the oil and gas sector. Emissions could rapidly grow as the province launches its liquified natural gas industry with the construction of the LNG Canada project in Kitimat.

Mr. Wieting said the new federal plan won't solve B.C.'s challenges. “The federal government is not coming to the rescue with the missing plans to give us certainty that we can meet federal and provincial targets. It is still up to the provinces to step up to the plate."

The B.C. government first wrote its climate action targets into law in 2007, but pollution levels have been steadily rising and the province has repeatedly missed its interim targets. To get the plan back on track,

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the NDP government passed another law in 2019 that promised better transparency and accountability, including annual reports on progress on a range of climate measures.

The 2021 Climate Change Accountability Report concedes that greenhouse gases are growing faster than planned. “New information and emissions modelling showed that we are further away from our 2030 emissions targets than we previously forecasted," Environment Minister George Heyman noted in the report. But he said his government has a new strategy to make sure the province meets its legislated targets.

The report outlines the plan to meet the target for the year 2030, but skips over the looming emissions target for 2025, which would be to reduce greenhouse gases by 16 per cent below 2007 levels, and it does not set out plans for the targets past 2030.

The province, by law, is required to cut emissions by 40 per cent below 2007 levels by 2030, 60 per cent by 2040 and 80 per cent by 2050.

Sierra Club BC is asking the court to set aside the 2021 report, with the expectation that it would force Mr. Heyman to produce a new one that includes the missing plans. The environmental group is represented in the court challenge by environmental law charity Ecojustice.

“It basically would give the government a second chance to come up with a credible, comprehensive plan," said Alan Andrews, the climate program director at Ecojustice.

“We're in the middle of a climate emergency, we just had a year of record heat waves, wildfires and biblical flooding. The people of B.C. need a clear and credible climate plan."

In the court petition, the environmental group says the interim emissions targets are key to getting the province back on track with its climate commitments. “The purpose of legislating the province-wide targets for 2025, 2030, 2040 and 2050 was to ensure that British Columbia was on a consistent trajectory of lowered emissions that would allow it to meet the required emissions reductions by 2050," the petition states.

“These reports are intended to inform the public and the Legislature each year of British Columbia's exposure to the risks from climate change and whether British Columbia is on track to meet its emission reduction targets."

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